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GOVERNMENT MOVES AHEAD ON IMPROVEMENTS TO NORTHERN REGULATORY REGIME

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OTTAWA (June 12, 2008) - The Honourable Chuck Strahl, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, announced an amendment to the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement today that will eliminate duplication in federal environmental assessment processes in Nunavut.

"Our government's integrated Northern Strategy includes a commitment to promote economic and social development in the North and to protect the Northern environment, which requires strong, efficient and predictable regulatory systems," said Minister Strahl. "This amendment will help ensure that the principle of 'one project, one environmental assessment' is respected in Nunavut, while recognizing the excellent work of the Nunavut Impact Review Board."

The amendment confirms that the environmental assessment process established by the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement is the sole process that applies within the Nunavut Settlement Area.

"The provisions of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement, including the creation of the Nunavut Impact Review Board, were strategically set out to steward the environmental, economic and cultural well-being of Inuit beneficiaries and our land," said James Eetoolook, First Vice President of Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, the organization that represents Inuit under the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement. "I am pleased that the Nunavut Impact Review Board can move forward with its important work in full authority."

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada on behalf of the federal government worked in full partnership with Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, and with the support of the Government of Nunavut, to develop the amendment and reach consensus on the final wording.

There are currently several project proposals underway in Nunavut, with the potential to generate significant economic opportunities and jobs for the people of the territory. The amendment will ensure these projects are met with an efficient environmental assessment process and a favourable investment climate.

The amendment will inform and support work underway to develop legislation with respect to the implementation of the land use planning and environmental assessment provisions of the Nunavut Land Claim Agreement.

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